

March 3, 2022

Dear Co-Chairs Sen. Flexer and Rep. Fox, Ranking Members Sen. Sampson and Rep. Mastrofrancesco and distinguished members of the Government Administration and Elections Committee:

I am a resident of Cos Cob, where I've lived for more than 25 years. I lead Voter Choice Connecticut, the all-volunteer citizen movement to strengthen our representative democracy by advocating for Ranked Choice Voting.

I'm testifying in support of SB-184, *An Act Extending through November 8, 2022 Several Changes Regarding Election Administration as a Result of Covid-19 and Concerning Eligibility to Vote by Absentee Ballot*, and HB-5262, *An Act Revising Certain Absentee Voting Eligibility Statutes*.

While it looks as though the pervasive danger of Covid-19 is receding, that's what we thought last Spring. How wrong we were. SB-184 is an insurance policy against the possibility, even likelihood, of a resurgence of the pandemic that could force people to choose between their safety, the safety of others, and their freedom to vote. Preserving the Covid-19 exception to vote by absentee ballot is a sensible way to create certainty regarding access to the ballot box in exceedingly uncertain times.

I also support HB-5262, to amend state statutes regarding the "illness" provision for absentee ballot voting to align them with the State Constitution. There is no public interest served by creating voting statutes that are more restrictive than the constitution itself. The legislature's goal should be to make it as easy to vote as possible, not to create unnecessary restrictions beyond what the constitution requires. The obvious intent of the constitution's absentee voting provisions is to enable individuals to exercise their freedom to vote when obstacles beyond their control make it unreasonably difficult, or impossible, to vote in person. That should include caring for someone who is sick or disabled, putting oneself or someone else at risk due to public health crises or unexpectedly having to work late. Being delayed on a train due to unreliable public transportation shouldn't be the reason for disenfranchising well-intentioned voters.

Claims about the risk of fraud introduced by expanded access to absentee voting, including by members of this Committee, are baseless and should not be considered as reason to oppose either of these bills. The State Elections and Enforcement Commission [reported](#) that not a single incident of absentee ballot fraud was filed following the 2020 general election.

The fear-mongering about election fraud by Republican elected officials in Connecticut and elsewhere is designed with just one purpose in mind, to create an excuse to restrict the freedom to vote. It must not be tolerated; it should be countered by this Committee doing everything within its power to make it easier to vote, as it did with distinction during the 2021 legislative session.

Favorably voting SB-184 and HB-5262 out of the GAE Committee would be another step towards strengthening our democracy by protecting and expanding the freedom to vote; I urge you all to do so.

Sincerely,

Jonathan Perloe
Co-founder
Voter Choice Connecticut